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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (9/29): INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE ON  
ISRAEL - "LIP SERVICE"

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Main Stories:  
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Al-Ayyam leads with news that Israeli Premier Olmert is "trying hard" to push through an interim agreement with the Palestinians in which the issue of Jerusalem will not be included. Citing unnamed Israeli and Palestinian sources, the story states that the Israeli proposal includes a land trade of 7.6 percent of West Bank land, including major settlement blocks, in exchange for full Palestinian control of the Jordan Valley.

Al Hayat Al Jadida reported on its front page that Palestinian Authority President Abbas, "resisted strong pressure" exerted by Israel and the US administration to sign a declaration of principles. The two dailies quoted a "source close to the President" who revealed that the American administration has intensified contacts with Abbas and chief Palestinian Authority negotiator Ahmad Quray in an effort to persuade them to sign a declaration before President Bush and Israel Premier Olmert leave office.

A statement by Fatah leader Nabil Sha'ath about Cairo's efforts to end internal Palestinian division receives front-page coverage in all dailies. Sha'ath is quoted saying that a one-day session among the various Palestinian factions will be held in Cairo on November 14. Al-Quds, which leads with the story, remarks that Hamas has shown unprecedented flexibility regarding the formation of a national consensus government, in which Hamas will give up its demand for controlling "sovereign" ministries.

The dailies highlight remarks by Fatah Central Committee member Hakam Bil'awi refuting press reports that Fatah will use military action against Hamas in the Gaza Strip should internal Palestinian dialogue in Cairo fail. Bil'awi stressed that such action would be

contrary to the Fatah's policy, according to the Al-Quds' report. In related reporting, Al-Ayyam notes that Hamas released 30 leaders and members of Fatah in Gaza on September 28.

All three dailies front-page reports that the U.S. has provided Israel with an advanced radar system to detect potential Iranian missile attacks.

The dailies report that Israel has imposed a full closure on West Bank crossing points on the occasion of the Jewish holiday, Rosh Hashanah. The reports note that the closure started on September 28 and will remain in force until November 1. In related news, Al-Ayyam quotes Israeli Prime Minister Olmert warning against the emergence of a new, secret Jewish group in Israel, who are responsible for the recent injuring of an Israeli anti-settlement activist. In other news, the paper reports that an attempt by Jewish settlers to storm Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem was thwarted by Muslim worshippers on September 28.

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Weekend stories  
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Sunday, September 21, 2008

Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida led with the headline, "Settlers execute young man with twenty bullets in Akraba and attack village of Kuf Al-Dayk." Reporting also noted that in Salfit, four individuals were injured when settlers accompanied by Israeli Defense Forces, entered the town and destroyed property in three Palestinian homes. In addition, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida reported that

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settler attacks against Palestinian women in Hebron have continued over the past four weeks.

The televised debate between Senators John McCain and Barack Obama received front-page coverage in Al-Quds and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida. Al-Quds ran a front page article under the headline, "Amid the worst economic crisis of the Bush administration, Obama wins his first presidential debate over McCain." Al-Quds continues that the greatest difference between the two candidates was obvious in looking at the two candidates appearing next to each other: Four-term senator, seventy-two year old McCain with extensive foreign policy experience, next to 47 year old, first term, "fresh-blooded" African-American Senator Obama. The debate left Americans still wondering who the next President would be, the paper concluded.

Al Ayyam quoted Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch on its front page, stating that, "Washington is focusing on four tracks to move the Middle East peace process forward." Asserting that there has been progress in moving forward, Welch outlined the four tracks implemented since Annapolis and highlighted that Annapolis was the first major peace conference to be held since the Madrid Conference in 1991 and the only conference on US soil to include the participation of senior-level officials from several countries.

Saturday, September 20, 2008

President Abbas' speech to the UN General Assembly received highlighted coverage in all dailies. President Abbas called for a comprehensive and true solution that would end Israeli occupation and allow for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, next to Israel. He added that the solution would require international involvement. Abbas pledged to continue peace efforts with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's successor.

In a related article, Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayyat Al-Jadida reported that U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told Reuters that she still thinks it possible, despite obstacles, to reach a peace deal by years-end. The deal would include agreement on the creation of a Palestinian state. According to the article, Secretary Rice is especially hopeful, in view of Israeli Foreign Minister Livni's recent meeting with Palestinian Authority chief negotiator Ahmad Quray, held shortly after she was tasked with forming a new government.

Al-Quds ran an exclusive interview with Ahmad Quray stating that

"Israel is trying to unilaterally draw the borders for a final settlement: making Jerusalem a Jewish city and clearing out its Arab residents." He also warned Jerusalemites against taking disputes over absentee property or land before the Israeli courts insisting that, "Israeli courts will lay its hands on the property under the guise of State protection and eventually transfer it to Jewish ownership." Quray concluded that, "building a separation wall, a synagogue, or taking control of Christian property at [Jerusalem's Old City] Jaffa Gate, will not persuade Palestinians to give up one inch of Jerusalem, the future capital of Palestine."

The economic crisis in world markets continued to attract front-page wire coverage, especially on-going debate between Congress and the White House regarding a bail-out.

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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¶1. Under the title "So that we don't drown in shallow water," regular columnist Talal Okal opines in independent Al-Ayyam (9/29):

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"Does Bush have the ability to make decisions in the time remaining before January of next year? Or, will he and his administration go into an election campaign coma?... There are some who believe that the current Israeli settlement policy will reduce the Palestinian question to ink on paper ... [Arab League Secretary General Amr Musa]asked: Will the US administration allow the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution that compels Israel to stop its settlement policy? The US has already supported resolutions that consider settlements in the Occupied Territories to be illegal." ... He also wonders what international officials mean when they say that settlements are an obstacle to negotiations and agreement. Can't they do something to force Israel to stop the policy, or maybe their statements are just lip service? ... As a matter of fact, the international effort to support Israeli peace negotiations can be categorized as ineffective and [operating under the shadow of]... American hegemony... Nobody expects the negotiation process to move forward until the gap between the two parties' positions is smaller. Each party will use the remaining time... to reorganize its position and papers in preparation of a resumption of negotiations when there is a new, U.S. administration next year."

¶2. "Bilal Al Hasan wrote in Al Quds under the title, "The political basis for Palestinian dialogue" (9/29): "Talks cannot be held about upcoming presidential elections if at the same time, heads of security threaten to solve the Gaza issue through military action. Those who criticize what happened in Gaza because of [Hamas'] use of military force, cannot now threaten to employ the same tactics and expect to be immune to criticism... especially when U.S. policy is biased against the Arab resolution against Israeli] settlements... unbalanced dialogue [will not] lead to a new international move that pushes Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in the right direction..."

Marchese